

## *Texas Board of Legal Specialization announces chair and new board members*



The Texas Board of Legal Specialization, or TBLS, announced the appointment of Cynthia Graham as its new board chair on November 17. Graham will lead the board, which is responsible for overseeing the administration of the board certification program, enhancing the value of board certification, and increasing its public awareness. Graham has been certified in family law by TBLS since 2002. She opened her own law office in 1994 and has been serving the Panhandle community with various family law services, including custody matters, property cases, contested divorces, and collaborative dissolutions. Graham also served on the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors and the State Bar of Texas Family Law Council. “Welcoming Cynthia as board chair of our organization is an honor as she brings more than 30 years of experience across various family law areas,” said TBLS Executive Director Leo Figueroa. TBLS also announced the appointments of Tammy Simien Moon, of Houston; Mark Shank, of Dallas; and David Schulman, of Austin; as board members. To learn more about TBLS, go to [tbls.org](http://tbls.org).

### **TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION AWARDS \$15,000 TO CHILDSAFE**

Bexar County’s Children’s Advocacy Center, ChildSafe, was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation. The funds will aid the trauma-focused care center’s victim services. Specifically, the grant will provide to victims of child abuse certified trauma-informed language and sign language interpreters for forensic interviews, family support, and therapeutic services. Funds from the grant will serve eight to 10 clients and cover the costs for interpreter and translation services for approximately one year. “This grant will allow ChildSafe to continue to provide trauma-informed interviews that are culturally sensitive, linguistically correct, and forensically sound for our clients,” Kim Abernethy, ChildSafe president/CEO, said in a press release. For 32 years, ChildSafe has been involved with the direct care of children and families victimized by child abuse, child sexual assault, neglect, and child sex trafficking. Staff coordinates services for primary and secondary victims through local multidisciplinary, interagency teams. This coordinated effort involves law enforcement, mental health providers, and others. For more information about ChildSafe, go to [childsafesa.org](http://childsafesa.org) or call 210-675-9000. For more information about the Texas Bar Foundation, go to [txbf.org](http://txbf.org).

### **NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR PRO BONO AWARDS**

The State Bar of Texas Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters and State Bar of Texas Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters committees seek nominations of deserving individuals, groups, and entities that perform exceptional work in the field of legal services to the poor. Nominations are due by 5 p.m. on Friday, February 24, 2023. Recipients of the Pro Bono Excellence Awards and the Indigent Defense Awards will be notified in May. Award nomination forms are available at [texasbar.com/probonoawards](http://texasbar.com/probonoawards). For more information about these awards, contact the Legal Access Division at [probono@texasbar.com](mailto:probono@texasbar.com) or 800-204-2222 or 512-427-1855.

### **TRAVIS COUNTY HONORS JUDGE LORA LIVINGSTON AND OPENS NEW COURTHOUSE**

On December 2, Travis County ushered in its new Civil and Family Courthouse in downtown Austin with a ribbon-cutting ceremony along with a portrait unveiling for Judge Lora Livingston. The new civil and family courthouse, located at 1700 Guadalupe St., Austin, 78701, is about 430,000 square feet and contains 25 courtrooms, a four-level underground parking garage with 390 spaces, and a short-term child drop-off center among other features. The new facility replaces the Heman Marion Sweatt Travis County Courthouse, which was built in 1931 and hasn’t been renovated in more than 50 years, according to the court’s website. The current courthouse accommodates only four courtrooms and 15 adapted spaces for court. Livingston, of the 261st District Court in Travis County, is honored with a portrait, set to be unveiled on the new courthouse’s 12th floor. Livingston, who was the first African American woman to preside over a Travis County district court when she was elected in 1999, planned to retire from the bench when her term ended on December 31.

### **WELLS FARGO JOINS TAJF’S PRIME PARTNER BANK PROGRAM TO BOOST FUNDING FOR LEGAL AID IN TEXAS**

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation, or TAJF, the largest state-based funding source for civil legal aid, announced Wells Fargo has joined the TAJF’s Prime Partner bank program, a significant step toward making legal assistance more accessible for thousands of Texans. Funding from this program helps TAJF provide legal aid services to more than 100,000 Texans across the state each year. Prime Partner banks and credit unions voluntarily pay higher interest rates for Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts, or IOLTA, a method of raising money for civil legal aid and to support improvements to the justice system. Prime Partner financial institutions pay 75% of the federal funds target rate on IOLTA accounts, which is well above the eligibility requirements for banks participating in the IOLTA program. “Many Texans are facing serious economic hardships, including evictions and domestic violence situations, and simply do not have the funds to hire an attorney,” said TAJF Board of Directors Chair Deborah Hankinson in a press release. “By paying higher interest rates on IOLTA accounts, Prime Partner banks help ensure that low-income Texans have access to basic and essential civil legal services. We welcome a well-known and leading financial institution like Wells Fargo to the Prime Partner program.” For more information about the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, go to [teajf.org](http://teajf.org). **TBJ**